

PERESKIA ACULEATA (CACTACEAE),
IN THE LOWER RIO GRANDE VALLEY OF TEXAS

On a 11 May 1996 field trip, a landowner told me he had cactus climbing into trees on a tract of land which had never been cleared. The site is 3.3 km northwest of Sebastian, Willacy County, Texas, U.S.A. The owner stated that the wooded tract and his residence had been in the family for many years and the cactus had not been planted. Nor did it grow around the residence. The tract is now surrounded by fields of Upland Cotton, *Gossypium hirsutum* L., and Grain Sorghum, *Sorghum bicolor* L. var. *durra* Hubbard & Rehd.

I found the hanging *Pisonia*-like leaves with little trouble. That is, the small spines found me several times as I searched until I found the wickedly-spined stems and areoles largely hidden in guinea grass (*Panicum maximum* Jacq.). The stems climb into trees, branch, and spread like vines. The leafy, distal ends with hooked spines hang down within two meters of the ground. William MacWhorter identified it as *Pereskia aculeata* Miller, lemonvine. Benson (1982) gives the range only as "Carribean Tropical Forest" and cites localities where the species has escaped cultivation in Florida. Britton and Rose (1963) give the range as the West Indies and Atlantic and Carribean Coasts of South America. Bravo Hollis (1937) indicates it is encountered in the wild in the littoral regions of the Gulf of Mexico.)

I assume these plants are naturalized from some former site now under the plow. The habitat is typical of riparian woodland dominated by sugar hackberry (*Celtis laevigata* Willd.) with a ground cover of guinea grass. This habitat may be a relict reflecting an ancient channel of the Rio Grande. The soil is Willacy fine sandy loam, 0 to 1% slopes (Turner et al. 1982). Where undisturbed, the natural ground cover is mostly subshrubs such as pigeonberry (*Rivina humilis* L.) and chaff-flower (*Achyranthes aspera* L.), and scattered clumps of rusty-seeded paspalum (*Paspalum langei* (Fourn.) Nash), manzanita (*Malpighia glabra* L.), and tropical sage (*Salvia coccinea* Buchoz ex Etlinger). A list of all species found on the tract appears in Ideker (1996).

Voucher specimens: *Pereskia aculeata*: TEXAS. Willacy Co.: 3.3 km NW of Sebastian, 11 May 1996, Ideker ABR11. *Achyranthes aspera*: TEXAS. Willacy Co.: 3.3 km NW of Sebastian, 11 May 1996, Ideker ABR05 (BRIT).

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